

# **2007 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Competition Winners**

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# **Seventh Grade First Place Essay**

## **KAYLA KELLER**

St. Margaret Mary School

### **Title: School Violence Among Students**

School violence is a problem found in many schools. It can start out as a couple bullies threatening people to give up their lunch money. It could also end with a school shooting, suicide, or both, if it is not stopped. I will tell you how you can use Martin Luther King Jr.'s ("Six Step Process Toward Social Change"). To prevent school violence. The six steps are, information gathering, education, personal commitments, negotiations, direct action, and reconciliation and beginning the healing process. First I would gather information on the problem. I would find out what causes the bullies to pick on and threaten other children. I would see what the parents are doing about the situation, if anything. I would find out if the parents know that their child is involved in school violence they care about their children. Find out if the schools have any non - bullying programs, and if they work. I would need to research those things before I was able to move on to the next step.

The next thing I would do is to educate the parents and teachers on how to stop school violence and what causes it. I would also educate the bullies on what they are doing to other people. I would then promise not to give up on the bullies or their parents. I would then talk to the bullies and the victims and find a peaceful agreement. After that I would set up a non - bullying program in the school for the bullies and the victims and make sure it works. Then keep using the program until the problem is resolved. That is how I would use the six-step process to take care of school violence among students.

I think if you use counseling and a bullying program that help people get along and set up a anger management program they will learn to get along without hurting each other.

## **Eighth Grade First Place Essay**

### **ABBIE MORRISSEY**

St. Catherine Laboure School

#### **Title: Fulfilling a Dream**

Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream. He was tired of the black community living constantly under discrimination. He had a dream and would be successful in carrying it out. Dr. King came up with a Six Step Process Toward Social Change. With this plan he would better the lives of millions and provide a better nation for us all.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Six Step Process consists of the steps needed to resolve the problems of discrimination and false social belief in our nation today. The first step is to gather information to better your knowledge on how to approach the problems as a nation. The next step is to educate yourself on the causes and effects of the situation. The third step is to commit yourself, or make personal goals for what you will hopefully achieve. The fourth step is to negotiate or come up with a solution that will make everyone happy. The fifth step is to take direct action and carry out your plan. The sixth and last step is to reconcile and begin the healing process which simply means to forgive and continue our lives on in a better way.

In our present day nation, African Americans are free and equal. Though sometimes it is not portrayed that way. There are still many not unusual instances in everyday life that go unnoticed but are hurtful to those that are affected. A conversation stops, or changes subjects, or becomes awkward when an African American steps in. Black people are sometimes treated politely but differently from others, whether in academics, sports, political views, or any everyday subject. Protests have sprung up referring to African Americans who have been being turned down after job interviews.

Many black people feel that their employer has declared them incompetent for reasons that they believe are discriminative.

To solve these racial issues in our present day United States, we have to follow Martin Luther King Jr.'s Six Step Process Toward Social Change. We know about the problem, the causes and effects, and we have a plan. Now, we just need to take action, reconcile, and continue on in a healthier and improved way.

We can fully and genuinely begin to treat all people equal and righteously by not judging the race or dreams of our fellow man. With the whole nation participating in an act to destroy racism and false social belief, we can truly fulfill Dr. King's dream.

## **Ninth Grade First Place Essay**

**LAUREN DEAN**

Bishop McDevitt High School

In today's society, racial discrimination, profiling, and stereotyping is present, but hidden. If you take the time to observe what goes on you will notice the people in action; the victims, and the ones trying to hide it. It's sad but there seems to be no way to stop it. The best we can do is try to help it, the six step process would be a start.

As an African American young lady, I have experience much racial discrimination. I am also very aware of how much of it goes on around me. It doesn't happen just racially, but even something as small as someone dressing different, looking different, or even a choice a religion can trigger someone to discriminate.

One recent profiling incident that occurred was when I was leaving Wal-Mart. I was helping my mom carry bags. The lady who worked there had asked me for my receipt. She did not know I was with my mom who's white. I was confused at first because everyone else walking out had a bag just as I did, and she randomly asked me if I had my receipt. I looked around and there wasn't another person of color or a different background besides me. After I left my mom and I realized why the lady asked me. We talked it over and we both know it goes on everywhere. We started discussing it and my mom told me about many profiling and stereotyping incidents she could explain to me that involved my dad.

She told me that when my brothers and I were younger that on many occasions people had came up to her and asked her where she adopted her beautiful children. They never thought to think that she was married to an African American man. She said she thought it was funny because they would profile without even knowing her.

The six-step process can be used in today's society because even though the racial discrimination, stereotyping, and profiling is present some people don't see it. If we work hard to stop it, we will succeed

because people should not get away with it that easily. To make people see it, they have to understand there they are doing it. They must be made aware and in turn receive sensitivity training

To make people understand it, they must be educated and learn the differences in racial backgrounds so that they can be diverse.

Finally and most of all they need to be exposed, experience all cultures, and be a part of life with all of mankind.

This mindset can be altered and one person can make a difference. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream and it's our responsibility to live it.

# **Tenth Grade First Place Essay**

## **PETER QUACH**

Bishop McDevitt High School

**Theme: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King developed the Six Step Process Toward Social Change. Racism and discrimination have not vanished from the face of the earth. It is sometimes easy to identify situations, but difficult to resolve them.**

Envision the world. Now imagine if you could live in a world full of fairness and no discrimination between groups. Such a lifestyle is not possible unless everyone strives to work for it. Starting with me, I can use Dr. King's Six Step Process Toward Social Change by first gathering information and ending up with reconciling the discriminator. In doing so, I have to start small and work my way up to the bigger problems of society.

I can resolve issues by going to family and friends who know something about the discrimination or racism. I would later identify the situations by going to different organizations of people that deal specifically with racism to get different perspectives on the problems. Afterwards, I would be able to put it all together and understand it on my part. I still have to respect the people's ideas and move on. By having a good foundation in education, I can show that people are entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to express it at the wrong times.

In addition to gathering information to prevent racism and discrimination, I would have to commit myself to resolving the situations. I truly believe in doing this so that everyone can finally live in peace. I am not going to stop until I am able to achieve my purpose and goal. Because of my personal commitments, I can continue to do this as long as I live.

I can also negotiate with the two conflicting sides and state how important it is to have a belief in one's life. In doing so, I can prove to others that if you stay with what you believe, you will be able to accomplish it. I can show how discriminating against others may appear to be fun and fulfilling to the mind at first, it truly is not rewarding in the end. This is something too few people today understand. I will also make it so that each side of the conflict has something that they would benefit from. In executing that, I can show that it is important to stand up for what you believe in, to see it accomplished.

Afterwards, I will be able to take direct action into executing my plans for a better world. If I see someone being devastated for what they practice in their belief, I would go straight to that person without hesitation and urge them to ignore what they hear, and to continue with their faith. I would even try my best to find the source of the racism and discrimination in that particular area and stop it. I can do that by gathering

information that leads to the discrimination and stand up for the rights of mankind. For example, I can make posters and signs that deal with unfair social beliefs and hang them wherever needed.

With all of these said and done, I will be able to begin the reconciliation and healing processes. This step is very critical in making the world a better place for all to live in. If no one was forgiven, then no one would be reunited. I would go to everyone to forgive them for what they have done and make peace with them, just as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would have loved to see completed during his life.

My anticipated result of these actions is that it will spread and live on in other people's hearts, even after my time and that of my descendants. Martin Luther was never able to see this fulfilled, but now it is up to us to complete it for him in this bountiful world. Envision the world again. Now, envision that same world united in the eyes of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: The way we all want it to be.

# Eleventh Grade First Place Essay

## DAVID FISHER

Bishop McDevitt High School

Title: OLIVE BRANCHES

In our world today we see prejudice take many shapes. Discrimination based on differences in religious beliefs, race, gender, and sexual orientation, is as much of a problem today as it ever was. It is amazing to think that even though mankind has survived sharing one earth for this long, we can still be so divided because of our diversity. One would think — or would hope — that after living together for such a long time, we could begin to *accept* one another's differences and see the variety, which is inherent in humanity as a good thing! Sadly, this is not the case. One example that, to me, has been very prevalent in our society is predetermination based on religion.

This is a problem that makes headlines around the world. The Middle East has been plagued by problems based on religion since biblical times, but at the same time, we see people martyred for their own beliefs right at home in the United States. I think this form of discrimination should prompt us more than ever to ask; "what can I do to help". This question should in turn inspire us to look upon the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his "Six Step Process Toward Social Change". I personally intend to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the people who have different religious views from those I cherish through the use of these steps. In so doing, I hope to strengthen my bonds with all those who share my world.

The first step, information gathering, is crucial in any kind of relationship. Whether it be with friends or dating or negotiations with foreign ambassadors, you must know about a person in order to really understand them. In the same way, we should foster healthy relationships with our fellow man by trying to learn as much about others as possible — the first step, information gathering. In this case, in order to overcome discrimination of religion, we should make our best effort to comprehend religious beliefs that informs our understanding of others rather than avoiding them in our own misguided fears or hatred. In the future, I personally will not be so quick to judge an entire religious group simply when one extremist group commits a crime, such as an act of terrorism.

Information gathering can be seen as one part of education, Dr. King's second step. However, it is not where the process of education ends. There are many other ways through which we might better comprehend how others see the spiritual side of life, conversation being the foremost. In fact, one can only begin to truly understand the religious views of others by communicating with individuals directly.



Even being learned on a subject, though, does not constitute the completion of education on a subject. The truly wise will also help others to honestly understand why some people hold true to their respective beliefs.

In my opinion, the next three steps of the process are very closely tied to each other. Negotiation and direct action are extremely important parts of making personal commitments, and at the same time, any "commitment" is utterly worthless without deeds to back it up. For myself, I have been, and will continue to be, open-minded when it comes to listening and sharing spiritual opinions (as this is what I believe to be a more universal term for "religious beliefs" in profound debates on the issue). Openmindedness and free speech are a part of my personal commitment to help end the oppression brought on by religious persecution in any form.

As far as reconciliation and the beginning of a healing process, well, that is really what must begin *now* if we are ever to live together in any semblance of harmony. We need to accept that there always will be vast differences in the beliefs of the peoples of the earth, just as there have been in the past. More importantly, we need to realize that we do not have to agree with anyone else's beliefs; we must simply accept them. I cannot reiterate that word enough -- acceptance. It is the key to coexistence, the key to peace, and therefore, the key to the healing we must all undergo before we can be united. It is also clear then, that we owe nothing less than acceptance *now* to the generations of the future, and to each other today.

# **Twelfth Grade First Place Essay**

## **STEPHANIE HERNANDEZ**

William Penn Campus A.C.T.S.

### **Title: Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged**

There are different ways in life to deal with racism, discrimination, or just ignorant people period, but Dr. King decided to create a way that could turn matters into a positive outcome instead of negative. The Six Step Process is a process that he created to help out all mankind, yet everyone doesn't use this process like they should. This process can help end a lot of the street violence that is occurring in the city of Harrisburg and help people get along with each other and not be so judgmental. Throughout this essay, I will explain to you how I used Dr. King's process to deal with a life experience of someone being judgmental towards me without even knowing who I was.

While I was incarcerated and sent to a juvenile placement facility, residents that did not know me stereotyped me for several reasons. They used where I came from, my sense of style, and the way I approached them against me and thought that I was a gang member which was unfair because they were judging me by my cover instead of taking the time to get to know me. Now, I could have dealt with the situation in a manner that would have been unfair towards them by not giving them the opportunity to speak to me and just do my time, make friends with no one, and proceed with my life, but I didn't.

Instead, I let the situation go and realized that people like that are small-minded and really don't know too much about anyone except for people they were raised around. Now, the way I dealt with it was by thinking back and realizing that those girls probably never saw a person like me and haven't traveled a lot to meet different types of people. They were just acquainted with information about violence and what they see on the television about the cities and the people that live in them.

After gathering enough information as to why they would judge me in that manner, I made the decision to give them a chance to get to know me instead of disliking them right away. I figured out where they were at in their lives as far as maturity and education, and then I made a personal commitment to make new friends while I was serving my time and attempt to make peace with other residents that judged me by my race.

By taking these actions towards these people, it became an everyday process and within a matter of time they became my friends, my support group. With me opening up to them, I was more capable of expressing my feelings and anger when needed and the same for them towards me.

In conclusion, I can actually say that this six step process helped me. My time in the center went

by a lot faster because I was at peace with myself and I stayed out of trouble. But without learning the six step process, it could have been a lot worse for me.

